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RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000535

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: DARFUR REBEL GROUPS FIND ASMARA INHOSPITABLE

REF: ASMARA 532

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) In a meeting November 3, Abdul Beghi, a political officer with the Revolutionary Democratic Forces Front (RDFF), admitted to the shrinking presence of Darfur groups and their high-level representatives in Asmara, echoing the observations of the Government of Southern Sudan liaison officer in Asmara (reftel). Although rebel groups see Asmara as a relatively peaceful place to operate compared to alternative locations (such as Nairobi or N'Djamena), they are often frustrated by the country's isolation. Poor quality internet and expensive phone calls inhibit Darfur groups from keeping up to date with their organizations' other offices, Abdul explained. Moreover, the absence of high-profile leaders contributes to their sense of isolation. The only leaders of note in Eritrea are JEM's recently arrived Osman Wash, and RDFF's Abdul Aziz and Abdul Beghi.

¶2. (C) The RDFF is a relatively small player on the Darfur scene, though it claims it has widespread support from Arab Darfuris. In addition to Abdul Beghi and his colleague Abdul Aziz in Asmara, the organization also has two officers in Kampala and two in Chad. Abdul would not provide specifics regarding its political and troop presence in Sudan, but did admit to the existence of a camp of 860 RDFF soldiers near the Sudan-Chad border. He confidently boasted of disillusioned Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) members allegedly breaking ranks to join RDFF forces. Abdul also explained the RDFF is actively seeking the immediate release of its political chief, Salah Abussurra, allegedly captured in the Central African Republic in April.

MCMULLEN